

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region IX
POLLUTION REPORT

Date: Saturday, March 12, 2005

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Subject: Site Assessment and Search Warrant Assistance
Chino Airport Radium Dial
7000 Merrill Ave., Chino, CA

POLREP No.:	1	Site #:	09MU
Reporting Period:	03/10/2005	D.O. #:	
Start Date:	3/10/2005	Response Authority:	CERCLA
Mob Date:	3/10/2005	Response Type:	Emergency
Demob Date:		NPL Status:	Non NPL
Completion Date:		Incident Category:	Removal Action
CERCLIS ID #:		Contract #	
RCRIS ID #:			

Site Description

On February 24, 2005, the National Radiation and Indoor Environments Laboratory (NRIEL) Scanner Van conducted a survey of aircraft hangars at the Chino Airport, Chino, San Bernardino County, California to assess for the presence of radium. The hangars are leased by Heritage Aero. The basis of this scan was information of the presence of radium containing aircraft gauges from the Preservation Aviation Removal Site being illegally stored at the airport. Preservation Aviation, Inc. and Heritage Aero, Inc. are owned by the same individual. The survey confirmed the presence of the storage of radium containing items at the airport.

At the request of the Los Angeles Hazardous Waste Strikeforce headed up by the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Scanner Van data was provided to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The FBI is currently investigating the illegal storage of hazardous and radioactive waste at the Preservation Aviation site in North Hollywood, Los Angeles County, California. Based on the data and after reviewing documents provided by the California Department of Health Services Radiologic Health Branch (RHB), the FBI obtained a search warrant to search three hangars (A-465,#11; A-460, #11 and B-320, #12) rented to the Heritage Aero.

On March 10, 2005, the FBI executed the search warrant. The participants to the warrant included the FBI Environmental Crimes Investigator, the Hazardous Materials Response Team (Los Angeles) (HMRT) and the Hazardous Materials Response Unit (Washington, D.C.)(HMRU), EPA Region 9 Emergency Response Section the California Department of Health Services Radiologic Health Branch (RHB). The EPA team consisted of On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) Robert Wise, three Superfund Technical Assessment and Response Team (START) members, 2 Emergency and Rapid Removal Service contractors, 1 NRIEL scientist and one member of the the U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Strike Team.

During the warrant, the EPA and HMRT personnel made level C entries to collect environmental data and criminal evidence. EPA personnel collected samples including: wipe samples for removable radioactive contamination, fixed alpha radiation survey measurements, gamma isotope speciation data, air samples for radioactive particulates and radon samples (real-time detection). EPA personnel also collected all chemical

samples for use in the FBI criminal case and to support an Action Memorandum.

The first hangar searched was A-465, #11. This hangar had the strongest response during the scanner van survey with readings in excess of 20 times background. Hand held dose rate surveys outside the hangar documented over 300 uR/hr. During the search and assessment of Hangar No. A-465, No. 11, EPA's data indicated the presence of elevated levels of radon above EPA action levels, elevated levels of airborne alpha and beta emitters, gamma dose rates up to 5,000 uR/hr, fixed alpha emitter contamination, removable alpha and beta emitter contamination above Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Reg. Guide 1.86; and confirmation of the presence of radium using a multi-channel gamma spectrometer. After examining the data and consulting with RHB and NRIEL scientists, OSC Robert Wise requested that the entire Hangar No. A-465 be quarantined due to the presence of uncontrolled radioactive materials and common airspace throughout the entire hangar. The hangar is a steel building with the individual suites separated by a chain link fence. This quarantine was effected through a request to the San Bernardino County Fire Department and Chino Fire Department for a Red Tag. The Red Tag prohibits members of the public or the responsible party from entering the hangar until such time as the public health threat has been abated. To address this threat, the OSC tasked the ERRS contractor to place a ventilation system inside the hangar to filter the air and to cover the radioactive materials to prevent further migration of contaminated particulates. Investigations of Hangar A-465 are on-going.

The search team then moved over to the second hangar leased by Heritage Aero, Hangar A-460, #11. Neither the Scanner Van or hand-held instruments detected radiation on the outside of Hangar A-460, #11. Based on this data and information provided by the a consultant to the responsible party, the search team entered the hangar in Level D to conduct a document search. The document search was conducted by the FBI. Additional radiation surveys were conducted by the Certified Health Physicist from RHB inside the hangar and no radiation was detected.

Once search operations at A-460 were completed, the search moved to Hangar B-320, #12. This hangar is currently under the control of RHB, which has a Cease and Desist Order against the Heritage Aero and its owner to prevent him from entering the hangar. The hangar is a concrete tilt up building with a large steel door on the front. Each hangar in this building is a separate unit with no access to other units or common ventilation. Assessment operations inside this hangar documented the presence of elevated levels of radon above the EPA action level of 4 pCi/l, airborne alpha and beta emitters and fixed alpha contamination in excess of the action levels in NRC Reg. Guide 1.86.

In response to the threat to public health posed by Hangars A-465, #11 and B-320, #12, the FBI referred the site to USEPA for cleanup.

Current Activities

See Above

OSC Robert Wise issued CERCLA General Notices to Heritage Aero, Preservation Aviation and their owner for the cleanup of Hangars A-465, #11 and B-320, #12. CERCLA General Notices were also issued to the Airport for Hangars A-465, #11 and B-320, #12. A CERCLA General Notice was issued to the Chino Development League, the Master Lease Holder for Hangar B-320, #12. The Airport and the business owner have indicated that they intend to take action. Hangar A-465 will remain Red Tagged until such time that the radioactive materials and contamination can be removed or air surveillance demonstrates that members of the public entering the hangars are exposed via inhalation to radioactive particulates and gases.

Planned Removal Actions

ERRS has installed a negative air system inside the Hangar No. A-465 to lower radon and particulate levels. Passive radon samplers will be placed in the building to monitor levels. START will be further assessing contamination starting March 14, 2005. Data from the assessment will be shared with RHB and NRIEL scientists to determine if all or some of the suites in Hangar No. A-465 can be reopened.

Next Steps

1. The OSC is currently in discussions with the owner of the dials and the Airport management concerning the removal of the dials.
2. Removal of the dials from Hangar No. A-465
3. Decon of Hangar No. A-465
4. Reopening of Hangar No. A-465
5. Removal of dials from Hangar No. B-320
6. Decon of Hangar No. B-320
7. Action Memorandum for Hangars A-465 and B-320, #12.

Key Issues

1. Hangar No. 1 Quarantine
2. PRP Enforcement

Estimated Costs *

	Budgeted	Total To Date	Remaining	% Remaining
Extramural Costs				
Intramural Costs				
Total Site Costs	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%

* The above accounting of expenditures is an estimate based on figures known to the OSC at the time this report was written. The OSC does not necessarily receive specific figures on final payments made to any contractor(s). Other financial data which the OSC must rely upon may not be entirely up-to-date. The cost accounting provided in this report does not necessarily represent an exact monetary figure which the government may include in any claim for cost recovery.

response.epa.gov/Chino_Aiport_Radium_Dials